



S'



S. Fleming

81

15
349

SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE

OPENING

OF

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

OTTAWA,

25th January, 1874,

BY

Rev. JOHN JENKINS, D.D., Rev. THOMAS WARDROPE,
and Rev. D. J. MACDONNELL, B.D.



Ottawa:

PRINTED BY A. S. WOODBURN, ELGIN STREET.

1874.

S.T

REVINORA OLUBU
ADABAO 70

SERMONS

DELIVERED AT THE

OPENING

OF

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, OTTAWA,

23th January, 1874,

BY

Rev. JOHN JENKINS, D.D., Rev. THOMAS WARDROPE,
and Rev. D. J. MACDONNELL, B.D.



Ottawa :

PRINTED BY A. S. WOODBURN, ELGIN STREET.
1874.

Acc. No. 35319.

1874
(30)

NOTE.—The accompanying discourses were preached in the new St. Andrew's Church, in this city, on the day on which the Church was opened and dedicated to the service of God. They are published on account of their intrinsic merit and as a *memento* of the occasion on which they were delivered.

OTTAWA, February, 1874.

S E R M O N

BY THE

REV. DR. JENKINS, OF MONTREAL.

“I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord.”—Psalm cxxii., 1st verse.

“Now Peter and John went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer.”—Acts iii., 1st verse.

The faithfulness of the early Christians in the matter of public worship deserves to be noted in an age in which the duties of religion are made subservient to predilection and ease, its privileges to the interests of time. Whatever the cause, it is undoubted that now-a-days, the tendency in Christian people is to set upon the ordinances of the Gospel, a lower value than was set upon them by their fathers; to deem them less influential in the culture of spiritual growth and vigour, than they were judged to be by the Apostles of Our Lord. You are too well read in the New Testament not to have observed the oft-repeated exhortations on this subject, penned by primitive Christian teachers in their letters to the early churches. It should be added, that the Apostles gave force to these exhortations, by their own example. Not only did they instruct their converts not to forsake the assemblies of the Saints, they themselves discharged, with marked faithfulness, the God-appointed duty. The closing verses of the Gospel by St. Luke contain this statement: “Jesus led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped

d in the new
the Church
re published
occasion on

Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: *and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God.*" In the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles, we are informed that when the Disciples were come into Jerusalem, after the Lord's Ascension to glory, "they went up into an upper room," and "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Further on in the same book we find it stated that the Pentecostal converts, numbering three thousand souls, "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread (i. e., in the Holy Communion) and in prayers." Again we learn, that "daily in the temple, and in every house, the Apostles ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Still later we read of their Sabbath-day visits to Jewish synagogues for purposes of worship—for prayer, the reading of the Scriptures and mutual instruction and exhortation. These and other localities, less known, were places in which "prayer was wont to be made" by the Apostles and their followers. The "first love" of the early converts impelled them thus to associate in the temple at the appointed hours of prayer, and to observe, even daily, the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By and by, "the first day of the week," called by St. John, "the Lord's Day," was specially observed as a day for bringing together primitive Christians, that they might engage in the worship of God.

Two reasons, among others, may be mentioned, why the Apostles laid so great stress upon public and joint worship. One, the views and habits in regard to the observances of religious ordinances, in which the founders of Christianity and the Church had been brought up. How rigid and earnest the Jews were, in such observances, we know from the facts concerning them which the Old Testament supplies. Much of the life of a sincere Israelite, in the best days of the nation, was spent in the performance of public religious duties. Temple worship,

the keeping of the Levitical prescriptions, the maintenance of a righteous character and of a devotional spirit, combined with practical pity for the poor, were deemed of higher moment than the things and aims which fill up simply this lower, earthly life. The psalms of David, of Asaph, and of other Jewish worthies, are full of illustrations of the truth of this statement :

“ I joy’d when to the House of God

“ Go up, they said to me ;

“ Jerusalem, within thy gates

“ Our feet shall standing be.”

“ I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy-day.” “ My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” “ I will go into Thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay Thee my vows which my lips have uttered and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble.” “ O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary.” These are a few only of many similar utterances which we find in the Old Testament. They show with great clearness, that the tone which characterized the higher style of Jewish piety, was such as we have now described. This preference and esteem for religion over the world of matter and of sense—the pre-eminence, that is, conceded to the things of God by the Israelites, sprang not from the Levitical institutions. It lay deep down in human nature. It is in fact essential to the normal man wherever you find him. The Mosaic ritual, having first appealed to this native principle, largely developed it. It were more correct to say that the system of religion inaugurated and established by Moses, was based upon it.

When, therefore, in the Providence of God, Christianity was introduced into the world through the instrumentality of men who had been brought up under "the Jews' religion," though the ceremonial practices which were peculiar to it—its merely surface parts—gradually disappeared, the foundation principles of Judaism were retained by Christianity, yea, were brought out into clearer light and prominence. The tendency of the Jewish system, forasmuch as form and sensuousness held so high a place in it—an overwhelmingly influential place, one might say—the tendency, I repeat, was to lead its adherents to fasten upon the outward, and to overlook the inward—those deep, spiritual principles which lie at the base of all religion. During the earliest years, indeed, of the Church, a tinge of Judaism was imparted to Christianity by its propagators. But, as the system of the Gospel grew, and its influence extended to Gentile nations, this Jewish tinge became less and less appreciable. How nobly Paul, that "Hebrew of the Hebrews," that Pharisee of the Pharisees, discarded the superficial—the merely temporary—in Judaism, and stuck to, and disseminated the essential principles of religion, his great sermons and grander epistles testify. Even Peter, a man of an order of mind and culture widely different from that of Paul, at first and naturally prejudiced in favour of the outward in Judaism—the mere ceremonial of the system—came at length to throw aside the trammels of the old *régime*, and to recognize those spiritual principles which lie beneath it—those grand, deep, generous principles which were opened, illustrated and enforced by Jesus in his sermon on the Mount. In regard to the Apostle John—that Plato of the Apostolic College—how little of the mere Jew, and how much of the true man and Christian clave to him! Not long was he in completing an analysis of the religious system under which he had been born

and educated, and in separating the vital and the enduring, from that which was superficial and temporary.

What I am coming to through these observations, is this, that the public worship of God is of an older and deeper existence than Judaism. First in families, which, by reason of primitive longevity, became numerous; then, in tribes and communities, the duty of a public recognition of God by open worship and combined service, was acknowledged and practised. The nations which immediately descended from the sons of Noah, early acted upon this Catholic obligation. In Egypt, in India, in Babylon, long before Moses, and even before Jacob, yea, contemporaneously with Isaac, temples were built, and an order of men set apart for the offering of vicarious sacrifices, and for otherwise conducting the ceremonies of public worship. We do not err, indeed, in supposing that in the days of Abraham there were priests and altars, confessions of and sacrifices for sin. This is clear from the account which the Book of Genesis supplies of the transactions which took place between this noblest of the Old Testament patriarchs, and that "priest of the Most High God" who was the truest type of the High Priest of the Christian profession, our Saviour Christ: "Thou art a priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedec." Where there was a priest, there must have been an Order of public service. Granted, the Mosaic institutions tended to bring out into more august prominence, the importance and value of social worship; but this is very different from supposing or teaching that a public recognition and adoration of the Creator, may, in this age, be set aside, or even lightly esteemed, on the ground of its having been derived, supposedly, from an *effete* Judaism. We do not ground the institution of public worship on the practices instituted under the Mosaic economy, but on the deeper and broader basis of man's native religiousness.

We have been contending for the practice of public worship, on the ground of the *religious* element in man's nature. We have another ground upon which to rely, viz., that *social* element which so conspicuously influences and controls the children of men. It is an ordination of Providence that men shall live and act in companionship. Society is a condition of the continuance and growth upon the earth of the human race. Man is of value and force in the world, as he is associated with, or influenced by, or exerts an influence upon his fellows. It is not of choice, or as the result of experience, merely or even chiefly, that men congregate into villages and towns and cities, or that they form themselves into companies, societies and corporations for the achievement of great ends. It is a necessity of progressive human existence that man should thus do. This law, the Creator has stamped upon our Catholic humanity. They who teach and practice isolation from their fellow men, promote a condition abnormal from the design of man's creation, and destructive, not less of human progress than of human happiness. Man cannot stand alone. He needs the help and counsel of his fellows. He needs to draw wisdom from the well-earned experience of others. It demands not, therefore, great sagacity to discover, that union of minds and persons, in the worship of the Creator, is valuable as an incentive to devotion, as a quickener of faith, as an impulse to good works; is promotive of the principles and acquisitions of true piety.

There is no form of religion however ancient, there is no religious system however erroneous, which does not recognise and act upon these two elements of our common nature, the *religious* and the *social*. Hence, in all ages, from the earliest, and in all nations, temples have been built for the worship of the Supreme, priests have been consecrated, altars have been erected, victims have been slain for expiation, prayers have

been offered to divinities, garlands have been laid upon their shrines, and on great occasions of religious festival, tens of thousands have been brought together. As these multitudes have cried aloud, and sung their couplets of praise, and bowed adoringly in presence of the wood or the stone, the silver or the gold, shaped in the similitude of the supposed deity, the faith of the *individual* in the inspiration and authority of the system, has been strengthened; and, though false and corrupt, it has yet received an impetus, which numbers never fail to impart to even an unworthy cause. Much more, when the system is divinely originated and ordered; when the One Living and True God is the object of adoration and service; when the cause of humanity in the form in which the loving and faithful Creator has undertaken it, is sought to be strengthened and promoted; when truth and virtue and purity amongst men, piety in a word, are the objects sought after, much more do numbers give force and influence and dignity to the divinely ordered system. Union of heart and purpose, union of effort, mutual countenance and support in a *good* cause are irresistible.

If that which we have set forth is founded in truth, it can not surprise us that the New Testament, as was stated in the outset, should have pressed these principles into the service of the Christian religion. It would have been unaccountable, had Christianity overlooked these foundation principles in the nature of man. But Christ and His apostles recognized them fully; and the Gospel, by precept as well as by example, sets forth both the advantage and the obligation of the public worship of God. Christianity is not a heavy-handed system, which lays an unbearable yoke upon the necks of its adherents. In this respect it stands in considerate and merciful contrast to the system of Moses: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." At the same time, Christianity discharges no man from the obligations of the

moral law. It grants no license to neglect, for example, the claims of a holy day. Free is it, unoppressive; so it is in the light of a privilege to be coveted, rather than as a duty to be rigidly discharged, that it enjoins the coming together of its followers for prayers, for exhortation, for communion and fellowship, for, in brief, a public acknowledgment of faith in "the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent" as Supreme objects of human adoration and service. Constrained by a common faith and a common hope, by common obligations and a common impulse, the first Christian converts joyed in each other's company, yea craved opportunities for interchanges of Christian thought, of Christian prayers, and of the expression of Christian hopes. These opportunities were of frequent occurrence in the primitive Church, in accordance with Apostolic appointment and practice. But they were not too frequent for men and women who had lately been rescued from the thralldom of superstition, of ignorance, and of sin, and had been brought to apprehend in Jesus of Nazareth the light, the salvation, the truth of the world, the way to the Great Father for mankind, and therefore for them. Even before our Lord's Ascension, during the forty days which elapsed between His resurrection from the dead, and His departure for the Heavenly Glory, each "first day of the week" found them meeting together for religious converse and prayer. And after the Ascension, we are told that in that consecrated upper room, the Apostles and Disciples, women as well as men, continued "with one accord in prayer and supplication." From day to day they met, in number a hundred and twenty, until the Feast of Pentecost. Simple, no doubt, was this primitive Christian worship. The Apostles would recount their Master's words of comfort, of instruction, of rebuke; His tone of loving sympathy with them in their trials, their apprehensions, their weaknesses; His toils and His sorrows, His patience in suffering, His over-

overwhelming agony, His readiness to fulfil the appointment of His Father in the redemption of mankind; all His love, all His pity, all His self-denial and endurance, the beauty of His character, the might and glory of His miracles would come under review, and would be exulted in, as one and another called them to mind in hearing of the assembly. Those too, whom Jesus had healed, or out of whom He had cast demons, or whom he had raised from the dead, would tell anew, and with tears of joy, of His loving power, His merciful compassion. Mary Magdalene was there, "out of whom He had cast seven devils." Can we doubt that she would refer to the Master's gracious interference on her behalf, that, "clothed and in her right mind," she would exultingly adore the riches of that grace which had been so conspicuously manifested in her deliverance? I can not. Lazarus was, no doubt, among the hundred and twenty, with the sisters Mary and Martha. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." With what exultation and thankfulness would they recall their Master's kindness, His sympathy with them in distress, the working of His greatest miracle for their rescue from sorrow in the restoring of their brother! The women who repaired to the sepulchre would recount the story of the resurrection morn, their visit to the vacated tomb, the vision of angels, and the first appearance of the risen Lord to Mary. The Apostles, once and again, would talk of the Last Supper, and the whole company would be inspired with new affection and regard for their Lord, with new faith in Him, as they listened to the repetition of His words of salvation, when He brake the bread and dispensed the covenant cup, and so instituted that later Passover of which His own body and blood were to be the sacrificial emblems, aye, the sacrificial substance. I can imagine them chanting over and over again in sad yet trustful lays, the Paschal Psalms which they had sung with their Lord on that memorable night. Prayer, too,

would constitute, indeed, we are told, *did* constitute an important, a chief part in these primitive services. They prayed for guidance in the choice of an Apostle in the place of Judas; the Holy Spirit controlled their lot which fell upon Matthias. For ten long days they watched and prayed, they exhorted each other and communed, they waited for the promise of the Father; then, on the Pentecostal morn the answer came, the promise was fulfilled, and the Spirit descended in power, rushing down from heaven upon them all in forms of fire; a hundred and twenty tongues of flame resting one upon the head of each of them—of the whole company, apostles and disciples, men and women. How glorious a scene! How unparalleled a visitation! How complete a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy! A hundred and twenty praying, waiting disciples, all filled with the Holy Ghost! There was an occasion of somewhat similar power and manifestation later on in the history of the Church. It was when at Cesarea, Peter, in the House of Cornelius, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to the Gentiles: "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." You know the result of that power which was granted to the church on the day of Pentecost, how that the Holy Ghost so inspired the Apostles as that they preached with overwhelming conviction to the wondering thousands who had come together, attracted by the reports which went forth respecting the visitation; how that three thousand of them were converted to God and baptized into the faith of Jesus; how that the whole body of the new converts, with the earlier disciples, continued "daily with one accord in the Temple." That was the golden age of Christianity and the Church! Blessed be God it is to come back to us again in more than its primitive power and glory! One sometimes thinks he would like to have lived in that age, and to have witnessed those early Pentecostal scenes. One sometime wishes he could take a few of these pages that

record the simplicity and earnestness, the tender, all-embracing generousness and love of those ancient times, and insert them, by some moral mechanism, into our modern editions of the Christian religion as, adorned and illuminated, they are bound up in purple and gilt, emulating the lordly, and even imperial gaudiness and pomp of worldly power. I am afraid, however, that the Church of the present has not the requisite preparation for a return to the primitive power and success of which we have been speaking. Were such a scene to take place in the midst of us to-day, as was witnessed in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, how many of us who profess and call ourselves Christians, would acquiesce in the manifestation? If one here, and another there, were heard to cry out in the midst of this day's preaching, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" "What shall I do to be saved?" I am afraid some of us would protest against it as "an innovation" upon the established order of worship. I doubt if in this cold, material age, the Church would accept without remonstrance, even the scenes which a century ago were witnessed at Cambuslang; or those which under McCheyene's ministry at Dundee awakened to thoughtfulness and to religion many hundreds of careless, indifferent, erring souls. The fact is we are bound hand and foot by forms and customs indifferent in themselves, but which we have invested with the dignity of principles. "Principles" forsooth! As though there were any principle in a liturgical form of worship which is not found in free prayer! Or any principle in sitting at praise which you have not in standing! Or any principle in standing at prayer which you have not in kneeling! Or any principle in singing a psalm, say of Moses or of David, which you find wanting when you sing in New Testament paraphrase or hymn the sacred lyrics of Wesley or of Watts. We may have our preferences, but let us take care that preferences innocent in themselves, are not magnified into

laws which, without authority, we seek to impose upon others. I myself have a preference for standing in public prayers. God forbid that I should set up my preference in the face of those who choose to "kneel before the Lord our Maker." The Churches have constructed ruts in which to worship the Most High Spirit—God's **FREE SPIRIT**—every Church its own little, narrow rut, from which it may not diverge, no not a hair's breadth! without incurring ecclesiastical anathemas. We have lost, largely, the freedom, and with it the true glory of primitive Christian worship. The "body of Christ" is cramped, its limbs are rendered numb and rigid through the too tight application of denominational bandages. The circulation of the vital Christian fluid is checked, is almost stopped by inflexible forms. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty!"

Thus they worshipped in those early days! Thus simply, sincerely, devoutfully, trustfully, lovingly! Little variation occurred in the simplicity of the Christian ritual until after the death of the Apostle John. He, when too old to walk to the place of Christian assembly, was wont to be carried by young men into the church. His sermon on these occasions was, "Little children love one another!" These were the only words which fell from those venerable lips. Had he lived in our day, some elder or manager of the congregation would have given the old man a hint that it might be wise to retire in favour of a younger minister! The well-known description of the form of celebrating the Lord's Supper, which has been handed down to us from Justin Martyr, may suffice to show, that for nearly a hundred years after the death of John, Christian worship and ordinances were characterized by great simplicity of observance. You know what the Church became subsequently: how under Imperial patronage, she assumed Imperial airs; how she attired herself in Imperial purple, set up Imperial State, and engrafted upon Christianity the sensu-

ous follies, the gorgeous displays, the high sounding but empty titles and distinctions of an *effete* Paganism. The natural fruits of these innovations upon primitive purity and simplicity, were error, corruption, ecclesiastical pollution, and tyranny. Against all such foolish aping, within the Christian Church, of old Paganism, our Reforming Fathers in Germany, in Switzerland, in England, in Scotland and elsewhere protested, as not warranted, either by the word of God, or by early Christian practice. Success, in many cases triumph, was the result of their protest, and the Reformation, widely established amongst the nations as a policy, came at length to be deeply rooted as to its principles, in the hearts of the people. In no country did Protestant principles, and the Protestant cause, take a firmer hold, or produce a more general moral revolution than in Scotland. A "people, prepared of the Lord," they greedily accepted the word of political freedom and spiritual deliverance, and successfully resisted every attempt which was subsequently made to bring them back, first to the old follies and superstitions of Rome, and then to that semi-Popish ecclesiastical system which was sought to be imposed upon them by the notorious Laud. I have sometimes wished that the Church of Scotland had remained as she was when Knox left her; especially as to the modes and forms of worship which were then in vogue. She consented, at the suggestion of the puritans of England, with a view to British uniformity, to accept as binding on the Scottish people, the documents of the Westminster Assembly, and she has held on to them with a tenacity unparalleled in the whole history of the adoption of Ecclesiastical *formulae*. England has almost forgotten the Westminster Confession and Directory; Scotland would still fight and suffer for them with the old martyr-spirit of her covenanters. In an age in which, in some ecclesiastical quarters, there is evinced a disposition to go back to the unapostolic, unscriptural, half-Pagan absurdities against

which the Reformers protested, a tendency to reproduce that sensuous form of worship which the Church borrowed from the Pagan ritual, in such an age, we may congratulate ourselves that the ecclesiastical system under which we are ranged, avoids these follies; and, what is more, stands little chance of being hereafter led into them. Simplicity in worship is too deeply imbedded in the preferences and convictions of both the clergy and the people of our Church, to warrant even a fear of offending good taste and earnest piety by the introduction of a supra-sensuous ritual. It may be that we have sometimes erred, if indeed we do not still err, on the side of bareness and plainness and slovenliness, in our modes of conducting worship; perhaps have bordered even on uncouthness. Certainly, in the Churches built, both at home and in this country, up to within twenty-five or thirty years ago, there was evinced such a disregard for neatness, not to speak of beauty, so studied a purpose to avoid everything tasteful and decorous in architectural style, that God's people laid themselves open to the charge of worshipping the Creator in "barns," while they themselves lived in tasteful and comfortable houses, some of them in mansions and palaces. We have left that age behind. In Canada, in the rural portions of our Presbyteries, no less than in the large towns and cities, places of worship are built suitable to the high purposes for which they are set apart, corresponding with the increased wealth of the worshippers, and in harmony with the general progress of æsthetic culture. There is no warrant in the New Testament, in early Christian practice, or in the genius of our Church as developed in her history, for coarseness, for meanness, for want of taste, either in our churches or our forms of worship. Where such inroads upon Christian feeling and taste have existed, they are now rapidly disappearing. Conspicuous is the proof of this statement which we have before us to-day. This "holy and beautiful house"

which you have built for the worship of the Lord God of your fathers, is a notable evidence of your desire that He should not dwell in tents, or barns, or barracks, while you yourselves dwell in ceiled houses, many of you in homes furnished with all the taste and comfort and luxury which wealth and civilization can supply. It is ground for special thankfulness to God, that you have seen your way to make this offering to His cause; and that you are to-day found within these walls rejoicing that His presence is in the midst of you—that holy spiritual presence which is the only true consecration of any building erected for Christian worship. When the Lord is in any such place, then and only then may we say, "This is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Both philosophically and dogmatically we have made out, I think, a clear case for the observance and maintenance of public worship. It might be argued also historically. Among all the nations of the modern centuries of the Christian age, Scotland, in this regard, has set the most marked example. The hill-sides which the purple heather adorns and makes fragrant, the beaten pathways along which old and young have trudged, mile after mile, to the old kirk, the vast assemblies which have congregated in church-yards, and under the covering of tents, and beneath the shadow of mountains, for sacred worship and communion, bear testimony to the love of the children of Scotland for the house and ordinances of God. Some of yourselves remember how the weakly and the aged, your own forebears it may be, found their way in all weathers, at great cost of physical strength, to the house of prayer. May it not be said and truly that Scotland has reaped the fruit of this so great faithfulness? Have not the Bible, the Sabbath-day, and the faithfully-visited Kirk done more than aught else for Scotland, and made her what she is to-day?

Be it yours to cherish the memory and to emulate the example of these grand old Scottish fathers. The tendency of living away from fatherland is to make men negligent of the habits and practices—the good ones at least—which prevailed at home. Here, in this new land, we think less of missing a Church Service, less of neglecting Ordinances, less of disregarding the Sabbath, than used to be thought in the old time in Scotland. Could the buried fathers leave their Scottish graves, and visit their descendants in this distant home, they would hardly recognize as belonging to the same race, many of those among us who bear Scottish names, and are proud of them; so loose is the view which prevails of Sabbath and Church obligation. I ask you to-day, specially to-day in the joyful circumstances in which you find yourselves, to consider the responsibility which you incur as Scotchmen born, or as descendants of Scotchmen, in this new land. We are laying here the foundations of an empire which will hereafter vie in population and grandeur with the great empires of the world. It will be, in after years, what *we* now make it who are inserting the germs of its future growth; *our* habits and principles will be transmitted to the Canadians of the future; they will largely become the habits and principles of the men and women who shall follow us in the generations to come. If the Sabbath is not observed by us now; if we are careless of the duty of Christian worship; if we allow the calls of business and of society to supplant the claims of the House of the Lord; if we get to think that once a day is often enough for engaging in public worship, we shall transmit to the Canada of the next century a mongrel, inane, half-alive form of Christianity, and the next generations will become what the people now are in France, which enjoys but half a Sunday, and that half, observed only by women. Apart from the deleterious influence upon our own character, which must arise from neglect of the Lord's

Day and of public worship, there rests upon us in the interests, both present and to come, of the land we live in and its people, a crying obligation to own our belief in God, in God's law, and in the sanctification of a seventh day. Then again, if we hold to our Christian professions and opinions, we accept the doctrine that by means of the preaching of the Gospel chiefly, the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, men are to be morally elevated, lifted up from error and wickedness to truth and purity; we believe that the building of churches, and the institution of Gospel ordinances in a community, constitute the leading instrumentality which God has devised and appointed for converting men from the ways of wickedness. Now it is not enough that you build churches, however beautiful and costly. If you wish them to become mighty and efficient agencies in benefitting and saving your neighbours, you must sustain them in efficiency by your faithful, earnest, prayerful presence. How can you expect the people who most need the guidance and help of Christian preaching and Christian prayers, to come to the House of God, if they see you who commune at Christ's table, careless as to whether you come or stay away? How can you blame young men and women for spending their sabbaths in walking and visiting, if you are not found regularly in your place in the Sanctuary? Parents I would specially enjoin to consider the effect which will be produced on the minds of their children, if they themselves neglect the Lord's Day and its sacred ordinances. If your children observe you indifferent to the claims of the Church and of the Sabbath; if in the morning or in the evening of the holy day, they mark hesitation, on some frivolous ground, in regard to your going to church, little store will they set by these high and sacred things—the highest and most sacred of all the things that could occupy their thoughts or fill their aims. You would thus promote habits of negligence which would grow into habits of

thought; and these again, would develope into vicious yea infidel principles. No parent can safely, in the presence of his family, manifest indisposition, much less negligence towards the "holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." It will tell unfavourably upon their future interests for all time, it will in all likelihood end in their everlasting perdition. I beg you then, for I am in earnest, if unhappily any of you have fallen into negligence as to your attendance upon Christian ordinances to retrace your steps; and for your children's sake as well as your own souls' sake, to honour God's sanctuary from this day forward. Cultivate in yourselves and in your households a love for the house of the Lord. Few things could tend more to develop into the highest religious power in this congregation the success over which you naturally rejoice to-day, than general faithfulness to Christian ordinances as established within these now sacred walls.

Peter and John went up "together into the temple at the (evening) hour of prayer." Doubtless they had gone in the morning. Again they go to call upon their God, to seek His blessing, to find His grace. We come up to the sanctuary to *pray*. This is a chief part of public worship. There are other places of prayer—there is the family altar—there is the secret place of communion with God. They are important, and not to be disregarded. But neither is this. God has instituted it. He has assured His blessing to the assemblies of his people; and it must not be forgotten that it was when the apostles and disciples were together praying that the Holy Ghost came down with power. Here, in His house, we are brought very near to God and Heaven and Eternal things. Here, through the great Mediator, we gain "access by one Spirit unto the Father." Here may the Spirit be poured down from on high.

And here, in answer to prayers the existence of which is known only to God, may *individuals* find mercy. You remem-

ber the two men in Christ's parable, who went up into the Temple to pray. You remember how the Publican—despised, outcast, frowned upon by the "I-am-holier-than-thou" Pharisee, how he bowed his heart as well as his head and, trembling between hope and despair, at length prayed "God be merciful to me a sinner!" I do not doubt that here to-day in this crowd of worshippers, some are detected by the eye of the Omniscient, reviewing their sinfulness, abashed in the presence of the Holy One, weeping tears of sorrow, trembling yet hoping that mercy may reach them, and that the loving arm of the Divine power may lift them up to reconciliation and life. God help you my friends to remember that you have come hither, or ought to have come hither to pray! God help you to apprehend that, whether or no, prayer is at this moment within reach of both your hearts and lips! God teach you by His Spirit how to pray, and then inspire your souls with true prayer—with penitence, with earnestness, with simplicity, with trust—trust in "the Lamb of God" who taketh away sins. He will do all this. He waiteth now to teach, to inspire, to save. Soon as the heart bears upward to His Throne the wish, "God be merciful to me a sinner," mercy is yours—pardon, peace, rest, salvation! "This man went down to his house justified." Amen! so may it be this day to your guilty souls!



F

a

th

o

a

s

th

o

T

a

o

n

E

th

a

P

t

r

t

t

e

S E R M O N

BY THE

REV. THOMAS WARDROPE, OF GUELPH.

THE LORD'S PECULIAR LOVE FOR THE GATES OF ZION.

PSALM LXXXVII. 2.—The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

HEBREWS XII. 22.—But ye are come unto Mount Zion.

The Lord loves the “dwellings of Jacob,”—that is to say, the households, the homes, of His people. That He does so is obvious enough from this fact alone, that He refers to them for a comparison, when making an emphatic declaration of His supreme love for the “gates of Zion.” He is the God of all the families of the earth that call upon His name. However obscure their abodes may be, they are all well known to Him. The angel of the Lord encampeth, and encompasseth them round about. The Lord Himself is with them, by His Spirit, in their occupations, their trials, and their enjoyments. When they meet at their tables, and ask His blessing upon the bounties of His providence, He is there to give them the blessing. When they gather around their domestic altars for prayer, and praise, and the reading of His word, He is near to answer their prayers, to accept their praises, and to open their eyes that they may see wondrous things out of His law.

These “dwellings of Jacob” are many, and — we rejoice to believe—becoming more and more numerous, though few in number yet, compared with what they ought to be. On many a hill, in many a glen, on many well-cultivated farms, in many little “clearings” in which

patient toil is still hewing out a home, as well as on crowded streets and thoroughfares, there are "tabernacles of the righteous," in which is heard "the voice of rejoicing and salvation." On such family circles the Lord looks down with approbation and complacency; to them He vouchsafes His gracious presence; on them His blessing descends. But He loves "the gates of Zion" more than any of them—more than them all.

Let us consider, in the first place, the declaration contained in our text: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" in the second place, the reasons why He does this; and, in the third place, the evidences of His doing so. And may the Holy Spirit impress upon our memories and our hearts the lessons that are taught us in connexion with this subject.

I. The declaration of our text: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." In the early days of the Mosaic economy, we find God giving forth the promise, precious to His people in every age, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." Of similar import to this promise, although apparently more exclusive in their tenor—the exclusiveness is only apparent, as we shall see by and by—are all the declarations of God's special favour to Zion. For, Zion having been chosen as the site of the temple to which the tribes were wont to go up to give thanks unto the name of the Lord, the word *Zion* gradually came to be employed to denote the church in her collective capacity, and especially the church as assembled for the worship of God. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitat on. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

In such connexions as this, the names of Zion and Jerusalem are inseparably associated. Zion was the mountain of the Lord of Hosts: Jerusalem was the city of the great King. In

reading the word of God, we are struck with the prominence assigned to these names by the inspired writers; and, the longer we read, the more clearly do we see how high a place the holy mountain and the holy city occupied in the affections and in the reverence of devout worshippers under the former economy. This was not because there were no mountains higher than Zion—not because there were no cities more populous or powerful than Jerusalem. It is true that Mount Zion was “beautiful for situation.” It is true that, by “the tribes of the Lord,” Jerusalem, with her walls, and towers, and palaces, and temple, was regarded as the “perfection of beauty.” But it was the special regard of Jehovah that exalted Mount Zion above all other mountains, and ennobled Jerusalem above all other cities, whatever their fame and whatever their magnificence. No reason is assigned in the word of God for Zion’s having been singled out as the scene of manifestations so gracious. Speculation as to the reasons of God’s choice would have been vain; and equally vain would have been dissatisfaction with respect to it. “Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in: yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.” It is this—God’s choice, God’s special regard—that makes Zion “a high hill:” it is this that makes it, with the holy city, “the joy of the whole earth.”

“The Lord loveth the *gates* of Zion.” In ancient cities the gates were the places of concourse. The Nobles and the Elders, on great occasions, sat in the gates. Business was transacted there, causes were pleaded, justice was administered. The reference in our text, however, is to the crowds making their way into the city for public worship. And the meaning of the declaration which our text contains is, that the Lord looked with greater satisfaction on the multitudes gathering at the gates and pressing in that they might engage in His worship at the solemn feasts, than on any other scene in all the land.

With the recorded expressions of God's delight in Zion, the recorded expressions of His people's delight in Zion are in perfect harmony. In language inspired by the Holy Ghost, David says, not in his own name only, but also in the name of the whole spiritual Israel, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand:" "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

II. The reasons why the Lord thus loves the "gates of Zion." As has already been said, we cannot tell, no man can ever discover, why Zion, as a place, should have been honoured above all places on earth, as that in which God's name was to be so specially recorded, and God's gracious presence so signally manifested. But the choice having been made—God having "chosen Zion"—we can be at no loss to point out some of the reasons why it should have been said, with such special emphasis, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

Here let it be observed that, in speaking of Zion, we are speaking of a place not merely of cherished memories and hallowed associations. It is all that, but it is infinitely more. Such were the blessings and privileges connected with Zion,—so manifest the tokens of God's presence and so rich the communications of His grace vouchsafed there,—that the apostle, taught by the Holy Ghost, has taken the name Zion, and applied it, as an appropriate figurative name, to the present dispensation—the dispensation of the Gospel; while, in like

manner, he applies the name Sinai to the former dispensation which has waxed old, and vanished away. Thus he says, in the words which are also before us this afternoon, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion;" not unto Mount Sinai, but unto Mount Zion. In the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest" of Sinai, was seen a fitting representation of the aspect of God's law with regard to those violating its sacred precepts. But the apostle reminded those to whom he wrote that they were not living under that ancient economy—that they were living, not under the law, but under the Gospel.

So now we say to you. Not indeed that you are, in any sense, to think lightly of the law. The law of the Lord is perfect. It is holy, just, and good. If you are taught by the Spirit of God, you venerate the law, even when it condemns you. You would not lower its demands, nor sully its purity, even were it in your power to do so. But you see that you can never, in any righteousness or strength of your own, meet its requirements, or pay its penalty. How full then of grace, in your estimation, must be the announcement, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth!" He hath "magnified the law, and made it honourable." All this is implied in the words of the apostle, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion."

But it was not of the literal Zion that he thus spoke. "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched," he said. Now the literal Zion was, just as truly as Sinai, a mount that could be touched. But Zion, as spoken of by the Apostle, was the dispensation of the Gospel, of which the literal Zion, with all its attractions and all its glories, was of old the appointed symbol. Some *say that the strictest analogy would lead us to regard Mount Zion as heaven, the dwelling place of Christ and of the redeemed. But, even so, believers

* Prof. Lindsay, on Heb. xii. 22.

are represented as "come unto Mount Zion." Thus it is said elsewhere, "God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together *in heavenly places* in Christ Jesus." This refers, as we suppose, to the high degrees of fellowship with Christ to which believers are admitted even here below. The "heavenly places" are in Him. To those admitted to such fellowship, it cannot be inappropriate to say, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion"—come to the actual enjoyment of the blessings of the Gospel here, with the anticipation of the fuller blessings which await you hereafter. The church below and the church above are one; they are two parts (soon to be one) of the great family of God. You are members now of that family which embraces the redeemed that are still here below and the redeemed that are now around the throne.

We need not trouble ourselves, Brethren, about any other so-called apostolic succession. That of which I speak to you now is no mere figment. Spiritual connexion with Zion hallows all recollections of the past, and brightens all anticipations of the future. When we call to mind God's dealings with His people, individually and collectively; when, for example, we remember Bethel, and the sublime and encouraging vision with which Jacob was favoured there; when we remember the Shechinah between the Cherubim; when we remember the synagogue at Nazareth, and Jesus preaching there the acceptable year of the Lord; when we remember the upper chamber in which our Redeemer instituted the ordinance commemorative of His love, and the room where, when Pentecost was come, tongues as of fire descended upon the disciples, and the outpouring of the Spirit prepared them for the great work of preaching the Gospel to their perishing fellow-men; and when we think, with yearning desires, of the grace and glory manifested in connexion with any of these scenes and occasions, let us

never forget that, "come unto Mount Zion," we are in the line along which all these glorious things have been seen or experienced. Being "come unto Mount Zion," we serve ourselves—nay, God makes us, through Jesus Christ—heirs and partakers of them all.

Returning from this digression, the design of which was to identify the Zion spoken of by the Psalmist with the Zion that is now, let us inquire *why* the Lord loves the "gates of Zion" more than all the "dwellings of Jacob"—looks with greater complacency upon the assemblies of His people for public worship than upon their separate homes.

1. Because, in their assemblies, their unity in faith and love, in interest and in effort, is more distinctly manifested. Christ's people are always *one* in faith and love, even when they are separated from each other; but when they meet together, their unity is *seen*. They meet on common ground. To whatever country they belong, in whatever occupation in life they are engaged, in whatever sphere they move, the distinctions thence arising are laid aside when they meet in the house of God. It is then more evident than in the ordinary intercourse of life that, in Christ Jesus, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." Before the one God they humbly bow. They have access into His gracious presence through His Son Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and men. They all rely upon the gracious aids of the Holy Ghost whom Christ sends to abide with His people always. They unite in the same confessions of sin, in the same prayers for forgiveness, in the same adorations, and thanksgivings, and songs of praise. They listen to the same word of truth, saying, as with one heart and one mind, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." When, in such worship, they

are brought nearer to their Lord, they are, at the same time, brought nearer one to another. The tendency of such united worship is to make them "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings;" and to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

2. Because, in the assemblies of His people, their regard for His authority and their delight in His ordinances are more openly avowed. His people will reverence His authority at all times and in all places. The language of their souls will be, "The Lord our God we will hear, and His voice will we obey." Whatsoever they do, they will do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. In their homes, their reverence for God's law, their trust in God's providence, their rejoicing in God's grace will be seen. In their intercourse with their fellow-men, those with whom they come in contact will "take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus"—that they are true and loving disciples of Him who hath said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." But when, on the return of the holy day, they say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it:" "As for us, we will go into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy,"—when they are seen leaving their various dwellings, and all setting their faces in the direction of the place where God's name is recorded, and prayer is wont to be made,—when they are seen entering His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise,—they give a more impressive and far-reaching, because a united, testimony to their regard for God's authority and their venera-

tion for God's ordinances. By the very fact of their assembling for public worship, they say to all around, to all within the reach of their influence: "It is good for us to draw near to God: We long to see His power and His glory, as we have seen Him in the sanctuary: We will go into His tabernacles, we will worship at His footstool: We love the habitation of His house, and the place where His honour dwelleth."

3. Because, in the assemblies of His people, there is the largest and directest employment of the instrumentality which He has appointed for the enlightening and reclaiming of a benighted and perishing world. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; for He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

How are these glorious results to be brought about, save by the maintenance of the public ordinances of religion? With God, indeed, there is all power. He is confined to no one method of working. But this is His way. It is true—and O let us never forget—that believers, *as individuals*, are to witness for God. Every one who has had spiritual life imparted to him is to be willing, on all suitable occasions, to tell what God has done for his soul. Every one to whom the message of salvation comes is to do what he can in spreading the glad tidings: "The Spirit and the Bride say, come; and *let him that heareth say, come.*" But public prayer, and praise, and the preaching of the word are, and ever will be, the great means by which God gathers in a people to Himself—the great means

for the preservation and extension of the knowledge of God among the nations of the world.

If there are any here who have been tempted to make light of the public ordinances of religion, we would ask them with what they would supply their place in the event of their being abolished. Let our churches be closed—let our pulpits be silenced—and how long would the knowledge of the true God continue to distinguish us a people, from those who are now sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death? How long would “one generation praise God’s works to another, and declare His mighty acts”? How long would parents continue to tell their children about the grace of God, and the love of Christ, and the value of their immortal souls, and the eternal life beyond the grave? How long would the return of the Sabbath continue to be hailed with gladness as a day of holy rest from our secular employments? How long would devout households continue reverently to gather about our family altars? Brethren, let the public ordinances of religion be suspended, and men would ere long cease to be honest, and property to be secure, and life to be sacred. The restraints devised by human wisdom, and enforced by human authority, would ere long become powerless to keep in check the lawlessness of the people. Vices that now “wait for the twilight” would come forth with unblushing front. Crimes that are now deeds of darkness would be perpetrated in the open day. Our land would become a heathen land: it would be, as the inspired writer declares the “dark places” of the earth to be, “full of the habitations of cruelty.”

But let us banish such imaginings, such forebodings. Let us be strong in the hope, the confidence, that He who, for His own glory, instituted the ordinances of public worship, will for his own glory perpetuate them. Let us be persuaded of this, that He who so loves the “gates of Zion” will, by the

effectual power of His Holy Spirit, attract and secure worshipping assemblies from generation to generation, till all His people are translated from the church below to the glorious sanctuary above—till, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, they come, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God.

4. Because, in the assemblies of His people, there is the fullest exhibition that earth affords of the glory and harmony of the Divine attributes in the wonderful plan of human redemption. The scenes that are thus presented possess an interest, and exert an influence, reaching, as we are taught to believe, far beyond this world and its inhabitants. The ordinances of religion are maintained, the Gospel is preached, that sinners may be saved. But, besides this, the ordinances of religion are maintained, the Gospel is preached, “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places may be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” How wonderful to think of such learners! “The principalities and powers in heavenly places”—the “innumerable company of angels,” the unfallen spirits that surround the throne of God. How wonderful to think of the instrumentality employed in the instructing of them—the object, as we may say, in the contemplation of which they receive instruction! The church of the redeemed. And how sublime beyond conception the lesson that they thus learn! “The manifold wisdom of God.” In the other works of God the angels are interested: at the creation of the world, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But especially are they represented as intensely interested in the still greater and more glorious work of redemption. Into its mysteries they desire to look. They had seen, in God’s work of creation, light brought out of darkness and order out of confusion. They had seen the heavens declaring God’s glory, and the firmament

showing His handy work. But, in view of the incarnation and atonement of Christ, looking down upon the manger of Bethlehem and the cross of Calvary, contemplating the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow, wondering at the misery and perdition from which He redeems His people and the felicity and glory to which He exalts them, they see, in aspects other and more marvellous than ever before, the Divine wisdom, and love, and power.

This gives us the highest idea of the glory of the church. Other works of God illustrate His attributes and perfections: "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." But if it is in and by the church, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit—the church in the lowness of her origin and the grandeur of her destiny—that God gives to the highest order of intelligences the fullest illustrations of His grace, and wisdom, and power, then the church, in her consummation, must be the most glorious of His works, and the wonders of redemption must surpass the wonders of creation.

The church as seen by us in our shortsightedness, and from our present standpoint, looks very unlike that now. Invaded by worldliness, rent by divisions, she comes far, far short of showing forth, in any adequate degree, the praises of Him who hath called her out of darkness into His marvellous light. But she is "a city not forsaken." She is called "Hephzibah;" for the Lord delighteth in her. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows what His church will be, when His gracious designs with respect to her shall have been accomplished. He sits as a refiner of silver; and He knows what the result will be, when the successive processes of purification to which He subjects her shall have been completed. So He loves the church. He loves His people individually.

He loves their households, the "dwellings of Jacob." But, more than all, does He love their assemblies, "the gates of Zion." Looking upon any of their assemblies,—even the smallest, even the obscurest of them,—humbly presenting their prayers, with feeble utterances singing His praise, and amid even so much ignorance seeking to understand His word, He sees beyond the many infirmities, the broken harmonies, of their present worship. He sees the day when they shall be "presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

III. The evidences of the Lord's thus loving the "gates of Zion." Let us at present notice only these two: His almighty protection extended, and His gracious presence vouchsafed, to Zion.

1. His almighty protection continually extended to Zion is an evidence of the special favour with which He regards her. "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces." This is the Church of Christ, built upon the Rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Viewing it with the eye of sense merely, and applying to it the rules by which we should test the strength and stability of human institutions, we might at times almost be driven to the desponding conclusion that Christianity itself, just as other systems have become effete, is languishing and dying. But such fears and apprehensions are groundless. The emblem by which of old the Church was typified is the emblem by which the Church is represented still—that great sight which Moses long ago turned aside to see, "the bush burning, but yet not consumed." No system of doctrine has ever been tested and sifted as the Christian system has been. Philosophers falsely so-called have attempted to prove its untenableness. Profane wits have attempted to hold it up to ridicule. To Jews

the preaching of Christ has long been a stumbling block. By Gentiles the preaching of Christ has long been accounted foolishness. But "unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ (set forth in the Gospel) is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." No kingdom of this world was ever assailed with such furious, malignant, untiring opposition, as the church of Christ. No kingdom seems so powerless, judged by ordinary rules, to withstand the assaults of any foe (for the weapons of her warfare are not carnal); but the church of Christ still survives. "Because I live," says the Divine Redeemer, "ye shall live also." The church of Christ still survives: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

2. His gracious presence continually vouchsafed to Zion is another evidence of His special favour. Here is the form in which we have the promise now: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This promise—let us unite with all Christ's people in saying—is enough for us. The rich, and the learned, and the powerful of the world may not always, or often be in our assemblies, although we should rejoice to see them sitting at the Great Teacher's feet, and reverently hearing His word. Outward splendour, such as accompanies the appearances and the progresses of earthly Kings, may not be here to attract the carnal eye. Pompous ceremonial observances may not be here, to satisfy those who look more to imposing forms than to the finished work of the risen Saviour. But if Christ be here, His presence is all that we need. If He be here, strengthening the weak and healing the broken in heart—if He be here, blessing us with communications of His grace, and manifesting Himself to us in another way than He doth unto the world—we shall have cause to say, with gratitude and praise, "He

hath brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love."

Do we not know, Brethren, from what our own eyes have seen, and our own hearts experienced, that it is even so? How often, in the assemblies of God's people, have the awakening, quickening influences of the Holy Spirit been bestowed? Those who have come among them, thoughtless and careless, have been constrained to inquire, "What must we do to be saved?" Mourners in Zion have been comforted. Those who were as sheep going astray have been brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

Such things, I say, we have seen and experienced. And what the Lord has done, He is still able and willing to do for His people. For His arm is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. Nay, what any of us have seen, what any of us have experienced, is only an earnest and foretaste of what God is ready to bestow. Were we, by the gracious operation of God's Holy Spirit within us, rising to higher degrees of faith, what bright hopes might we warrantably cherish, and what blessed manifestations of God's converting, renewing, sanctifying grace might it be our happy privilege to witness? Our own souls might be filled with light, and love, and joy, and holiness, far beyond all our past experience, or anything that we have hitherto ventured to anticipate. In our families, we might see unquestionable indications of God's being our God, as He is of all the families of the earth that call upon His name. In the church we might see the spiritual life by which she ought ever to be characterized—the sympathy, the brotherly love, the delight in God's ordinances, the willingness to do or to give for the cause of Christ.

I account it a privilege to have been with you this afternoon. I could give many reasons why it is seemly that I

should rejoice with you in your joy on this occasion. But I only say that it is my heart's desire and prayer that, as the years pass away, happy and hallowed associations may continue to gather around the relation subsisting between your pastor and the people of his charge; that by him, and those who may come after him, the Gospel may ever be preached here in its purity; that many, many of those assembling here from generation to generation may be brought under the power of the truth as it is in Jesus. "The Lord bless you more and more, you, and your children" "The Lord lift upon you the light of His countenance, and give you peace." Amen.



SERMON

BY THE

REV. D. J. MACDONNELL, B. D.

EPH., ii, 20—22.—“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

—o—

The figure of a building is a favourite one with St. Paul in describing the Church. “Ye are God’s building,” he writes to the Corinthians. “As a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.” “Rooted and built up in Christ,” “rooted and grounded (*i.e.*, founded) in love,” are the pregnant expressions in which, combining the two metaphors of a tree and a building, he describes to the Colossians what their condition ought to be.

In the passage before us, he speaks of the Church not merely as a building, but as “growing unto an holy temple.” Paul was “an Hebrew of the Hebrews.” In so writing he was doubtless thinking of the temple at Jerusalem, the centre of the holiest associations of every pious Jew. He may have gone back in imagination to the days of Solomon, the most glorious period of Jewish history; may have thought of the immense preparations made for the building of the temple, of the costly materials gathered, of the elaborate workmanship expended, of the cloud of glory filling the house in response to Solomon’s prayer, of the thousands of oxen and tens of thousands of sheep offered in sacrifice at the dedication of the temple. But, thought

he, there is a grander temple still, which is now in process of erection, built of "living stones" of infinite value, hewn and polished and fitted into their places; a "spiritual house," hallowed by the indwelling of the Lord, in which better and more costly sacrifices than Solomon's are continually offered; and that is the Church of God which rests on the corner stone Jesus Christ.

In thinking of this spiritual house, we shall consider—

- I. The Foundation and Corner Stone on which it rests.
- II. The materials of which it is built.
- III. Its character.
- IV. Its progress.

I. The *Foundation* and *Corner Stone* of the Church is "Jesus Christ." We may distinguish between the two things, and say that the foundation means the preaching of Christ—the testimony of apostles and prophets concerning Christ—while the corner stone is the living historical Christ himself. We have Scriptural authority, however, for referring both words to Christ. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." The idea seems to be that of a corner stone which also extends beneath the walls as a foundation, on which the sides of the building rest, and by which they are knit together. It is in Christ that the whole spiritual building is "fitly framed together." On Him it rests: "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." By the common relation of all the parts to Him is their coherence secured:—"to whom coming, as unto a living stone, ye also, as living stones, are built up."

Think of the character of this foundation. Let the words of Isaiah and St. Peter throw light on those of St. Paul.

"*A living stone.*" The words seem to convey a contradiction. A stone, one would say, is an apt image rather of

death than of life. However costly or brilliant, we do not associate with it the idea of life. But as the temple which God is building is a living temple, constructed not of dead blocks of stone, but of living men, the corner stone must likewise be living. In truth it is from Christ, the living Corner Stone, that every stone in the building gets its life. He is "the Prince of life." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He is the living Lord still. He liveth, and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore.

"A tried stone." One that has been thoroughly tested—one that is capable of sustaining the weight of the building. Christ was tried in all things—tried by the devil, tried by men, tried by His Father. And he stood the test. The Prince of this world came and had nothing in Him. Hypocrites sought to entrap him, but could find no fault in him. He seemed to be deserted by His Father at the very crisis of the work which the Father had given him to do; but His trust was still unshaken, His cry was still "MY God," and before he yielded up His spirit, He was able to say of the work, "It is finished."

A "precious" stone. Solomon had "costly stones" placed in the foundation of the temple. Infinitely more costly was the Living Stone that was laid in Zion for the foundation of the Church. It was the most precious life in the universe—the life of God's only begotten Son—that was laid down in order that new life for the race might spring out of that death. Do we value precious stones for their beauty? Christ is of rare loveliness, "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely." There is no flaw in the perfect symmetry of His character. Do we value precious stones for their rarity? There is but one Christ: no second Son like Him has God begotten.

"A sure foundation." One that will never crumble into dust. One that will not yield to the wearing influence of time,

or to the frosts of adversity, or to the fires of persecution. Through all changes, he that builds on this foundation is safe. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies," but he that rests on Christ "shall not be confounded." Tens of thousands have built on this foundation, and not one has ever found it insecure.

It was this foundation—this "living," "tried," "precious," "sure" foundation, "Jesus Christ Himself"—that the apostles and prophets of the New Testament laid by their preaching. Great preparations had been made for laying it. God's workmen had been employed in clearing away the rubbish of superstition. By direct types and positive institutions among the Jews, by the undefined longings and "unconscious prophecies of heathendom," the soil of human hearts was made ready for the coming One. "When the fulness of the time was come," He who had been "the desire of all nations" appeared. He lived, suffered, died, rose again, ascended to heaven. Then a few men whom He had gathered round Him went about the world telling the story of His life and death, resurrection and ascension. The first sermons were for the most part declarations of these facts. Forgiveness of past sin, grace for present need, the hope of glory hereafter, were based on these facts, and were not preached apart from them. On this foundation the apostles themselves were built, even while they were laying it for others.

Men have tried to build on other foundations. Builders have "rejected" Christ. They have tried to construct a perfect society on the basis of force, or of political affinity, or of social equality, or of this or that form of government, or of some particular set of opinions concerning the work of Christ. It is nearly as great a mistake to try to build the Church on the foundation of theological dogmatism as to try to build it on philosophical speculation. The living Christ has been sometimes as effectually hidden by the strife of sects as by the sneers

of sceptics. It cannot be too often repeated that it is not intellectual assent to any set of opinions about Christ that constitutes a Christian, but the knitting of our hearts to His by a living faith and love. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, ye also as living stones are built up." We shall never be living stones at all unless we "come" to Him and draw our life from Him.

II. The *materials* of which the spiritual house is built. "The saints build up its fabric." They are the living stones of which the holy temple is being constructed. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, defines the Church thus:—"Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified (consecrated) in Christ Jesus, called saints." The good, the holy, the "saints;" the men and women who have given themselves to Christ to be renewed and indwelt by Him, and who, though far from having "already attained" or being "already perfect," are living a consecrated life, a life of separation from the spirit of the world: these are the materials of which the living temple is being built. Notice the following points about these living stones:—

1. They are *gathered from all quarters*. Just as for the building of Solomon's temple gold was brought from Ophir, and cedar from Lebanon, workmen at a distance from one another preparing materials which were at last to find place in that holy and beautiful house, so through many instrumentalities God is gathering stones for His spiritual temple, old men and little children, sages and barbarians, from every kindred and tribe and tongue. Often, too, from the most unlikely quarters. Hidden, sometimes, under heaps of rubbish, as if they were not fit to see the light of day. Lying here and there, in obscure corners, in the fields or lanes, contemptuously or indifferently or unbelievingly "rejected" by ambitious builders, even as the great Corner Stone was Himself rejected. But God knows

where they are and seeks them out, and from dens of filth and slums of vice and moral wastes of ignorance and unbelief, as well as from the quarries of enlightened and civilized communities, they are lifted by willing hands and fitted into their places in God's beautiful house. The workers do not always know one another, though they are working side by side. Sometimes, alas! they hinder one another through ignorance and suspicion and narrow-mindedness. Not seldom one tries to pull down what another has been laboriously building up. But God knows all, and separates the good from the evil, and, notwithstanding mistakes and misunderstandings, the work goes bravely on.

2. They are *of various sorts and sizes*. Variety is characteristic of life, and these stones are living. There is no dead uniformity about them. There is room in the Church for the greatest variety of temperaments and endowments. The grave and the gay, the cautious and the impulsive, the educated and the illiterate, the noble and the peasant, those who toil with strong arm and those who toil with strong brain, may all find a place in the spiritual house, if only they have the one common characteristic of *life*. In proportion to the amount of life in it will be the usefulness of any one stone to the building—of any believer to the Church—not in proportion to genius, or refinement, or rank, or culture. There are low-born and untutored men who are pillars in God's temple, and grace it with the spiritual beauty which they reflect from Christ, while there are men of rank and culture who must be content to occupy a small niche where they are comparatively unobserved.

3. They are *hewn* so as to fit into their places. How rough and unshapely the block of stone or marble looks as it comes from the quarry! When you see it again after the chisel of the stone-cutter has dressed and squared it, you scarcely recognise it. Even so is it with the living stones before God's stone-

cutters have hewn them. They are so rough, sometimes, bristling with bad tempers and evil habits, that you can hardly suppose God will tolerate them in His house. They are so unshapely and unsightly, often, that the workmen are inclined to throw them away, because they can find no way of fitting them in. They are so hard, sometimes, that it seems almost impossible to make any impression on them. But God has many workmen and a great variety of tools. There is no stereotyped way of hewing the living stones. Now it is in the family, by the sacred influences of a Christian home; now, by the faithful preaching of the truth from the pulpit; again, by some startling event of God's providence, or by the loss of worldly good, or by the removal of dear ones. Corners are broken off, the roughness disappears, and the unsightly blocks become "as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

4. They are "*fitly framed together*" by the cement of love. However beautiful stones may be in themselves, they cannot be turned to account for a building without mortar. Even so must the living stones in God's temple be knit together by love, else that temple cannot rise in its beauty and holiness. Single believers may exhibit special gifts and graces, but it is only in the communion of saints that these gifts can be fully exercised and these graces strengthened. Moreover, each believer will be deficient in some elements of the Christian character, which it will need the stimulus of Christian fellowship to develope.

The relation of believers to one another is the result of their common relation to Christ. They are members of Him, the Head, and therefore they are members one of another. One Christian ought to help another, and at the same time to lean upon him. Each member of the Church is bound to contribute his share of life and service to the whole body, and at the same time he draws from all the other members whatever they can

furnish for his spiritual growth. How sad it is when, instead of giving and receiving good, each individual stands alone, not sharing in any common life, nor having his lack supplied out of the fulness of others! There are some pieces of masonry in which the stones are so firmly welded together that it is easier to break the stones than to loosen the mortar so that they will come apart. So it ought to be with the Church. We ought to be so firmly knit together by love that it would be easier to rend the individual life in twain than to sever us one from the other.

Love is the only cement that will effectually unite us, that will stand the test of time and trouble. Church members may be, externally and for a time, bound together by some other tie, such as the convenience of a place of worship, or the popularity of a minister, or the attraction of a ritual, or common adherence to a set of doctrines; but any one of these will prove a mere rope of sand, utterly powerless to prevent the whole fabric, however beautiful, from falling to pieces at a blow.

III. The *character* of the spiritual house. "An holy temple." "Holy in the Lord," i.e., hallowed by the indwelling of the Lord. The temple at Jerusalem was holy, because it was the special dwelling-place of Jehovah. It was not to be treated as a common house. Profane feet were not to tread its sacred courts. It was God's palace, where He dwelt in visible glory, and where He was to receive homage as a King, according to his own prescribed modes. We have learned that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that no place, no thing, no time, is "common or unclean," that God is a Spirit, and that the true worshippers are not those who worship in this place or in that, but those who worship in spirit and in truth, whether it be in the stately cathedral, or in the humble cottage, or on the lonely hillside. The loving, adoring spirit is God's chosen

home. God dwells more really in the heart of the Christian than ever He dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem.

It is the union of these living, loving spirits, in each of which God dwells, that constitutes the Church. If each one of them is consecrated by God's indwelling, and illumined with the glory of His presence, much more will the Church collectively serve as "an holy temple" in which the fulness of God's glory may be revealed. Holiness, then, is to be the prominent characteristic of the Church. The Church is to be a holy society; in the world, yet not of it; coming into contact with the world at all points, yet separate from the spirit of the world; not necessarily doing different acts from those of the world, but doing the same acts from loftier motives and to nobler ends; not cutting itself off from human cares and pursuits and interests, as if these were "common or unclean," but consecrating common work and living human life in the light of eternity. It is to aim at realizing the prophecy of Zechariah, when "there shall be upon the bells of the horses HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar; yea, every pot . . . Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts:"—*i.e.*, there shall be no distinction between sacred vessels and common ones, but *all* shall be consecrated to the service of the Lord; there shall not be the mischievous distinction between secular work and religious work, but all work shall be sacred, and our motto shall be, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Clearly this ideal is yet far from being realized. The Church visible is not up to the mark thus fixed. The Church, in any of the forms in which it is organised, does not present this picture of a holy society. Too often, there is as much of the spirit of the world manifested in the conduct of matters ecclesiastical or religious as in business or politics, in which,

unfortunately, too many men see no occasion for the exercise of anything but a worldly spirit. Yet, while there is room for self-condemnation, there is room also for thankfulness. Let us think of

IV. The *progress* of the spiritual house. "All the building fitly framed together *groweth* unto an holy temple." The building is growing. Notwithstanding apparent or temporary retrogression, there is steady advance. The wave recedes, but it is only that with gathered force it may rush farther up upon the shore. It seems sometimes as if the work of building God's temple were stopped altogether, or even as if some portions of the walls were crumbling away; but when we wait a while and look again, we find there has been real progress. Course after course has been laid, and still the building grows. Fresh materials are continually brought, and hewn and fitted into their places; and still there is room—room for thousands of living stones that have not yet been built in, room for all the good of all the ages.

Not only is this living temple growing in size, it is also growing in beauty—the beauty of holiness. As the generations of Christian men follow one another, there is a growing richness of thought and fulness of life. There is a clearer realization of the wants of the world, a better understanding of the power of Christ's gospel to meet these wants. We are the heirs of all the Christian ages. The records of devoted piety, the accumulated wealth of thought on the most important matters that can occupy the human mind, the history of the triumphs of the gospel over sin and superstition, the mighty though silent influence of home piety penetrating successive generations—all these are ours, all go to form the life of the Church now. What the Church of the future will be depends, under God, on the faithfulness with which we use and pass on the wealth we have inherited.

For we are builders as well as built. It is the peculiarity of this spiritual house that each layer helps to build the next. The first thing is that we be ourselves living stones, drawing our life from Christ, built on Him as our foundation. The next thing is that we be thoroughly in earnest in searching out other stones, bringing them to the living Corner Stone, and hewing and polishing them. It is by human instrumentality that the work is to be done. In our homes, in our schools, at our social gatherings, by our words, by our lives, as well as by the more formal preaching of the gospel, the building of God's holy spiritual house is to be carried on, until at last the top stone shall be laid with shoutings, and the chorus shall be sung, "HALLELUJAH! FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH. THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD AND OF HIS CHRIST. AND HE SHALL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER. KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." We may sometimes wish back the simplicity and the fervent piety of the early Church; but we ought rather to look forward, for the golden age of the Church is yet to come. Faulty as it is, the visible Church is yet to culminate in "the holy city, new Jerusalem," which shall need no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it; which shall have no need of the sun, for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof; into which they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations; into which there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth.

May the Church which shall meet for the worship of God in this beautiful house be truly described by the closing words of the passage which forms the text:—"In whom *ye also* are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." There is a temptation to rest in external activity, and to think that when we have a complete organization, well

managed "schemes," flourishing societies for various objects, we have a living Church. It is possible that we may have only the dry bones come together and covered with flesh, but wanting the breath of life. We may have cannon of the most approved make, charged with powder and shot properly adjusted; but they will be worthless until the spark of living fire has been applied. The temple was nothing till the cloud of glory filled it. So will the Church, however well organized, however externally beautiful, be utterly powerless, unless the Spirit of the living God breathe life into every part. Let us for this Church, for all our Churches, for the holy catholic Church in all the earth, take up Solomon's prayer, "Arise, O Lord God, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength." And may God give the answer, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it."



re
y
g
ed
at
n
ed
er
of
is
n
d,
y
i